

Benfieldside Urban District Council.

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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1920.

To the Chairman and Members of the Benfieldside Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit the following Report to the Council on the Health and Sanitary Conditions of the Benfieldside Urban District for the year 1920.

A memorandum has been issued to Medical Officers of Health for their guidance in drawing up their Annual Reports, and I have as far as practicable drawn up this Report in the order of the subjects mentioned therein. This may necessitate a repetition of some points mentioned in my Annual Report for 1919, but the Ministry of Health have again asked for these to be included.

The population of the District at the census 1911 was 8,355.

The estimated population for 1920 is 9,272.

The estimate of the Registrar General is only 8006.

This latter figure is in my opinion much below the actual population, but the Census which is to be taken shortly will give us the actual figures.



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NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The area in acres of the Benfieldside District is 1,525, and the number of houses situated therein is 1730. The majority of the inhabitants dwell in the town of Blackhill and the village of Shotley Bridge. The length of Highways belonging to the District Council are—Main roads nearly 4 miles, and other roads 10 miles. The sub-soil consists of clay over sandstone in the higher part of the District, and in the lower portion the sub-soil is sandy gravel over sandstone. The great majority of the adult male population are engaged at the Consett Iron Company's iron and steel works and collieries. A few workmen are engaged at the Co-operative Society Flour Mills and the Gas Works, both situated at Shotley Bridge.

There was practically no shortage of work during the year 1920, and consequently the number of persons requiring Poor Law Relief was very small.

The following Institutions in the neighbourhood are available for the gratuitous treatment of patients, namely, the Royal Victoria Infirmary at Newcastle-on-Tyne, the Poor Law Hospital at Lanchester, the Villa Real Infectious Hospital for the treatment of Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, and Typhoid Fever, and the Consett Iron Company's Infirmary, which is used for the treatment of accidents to workmen employed by the Company at their different works and collieries.

A Motor Ambulance is now available for the removal of urgent cases to the Newcastle Royal Infirmary, and also brings the patients back to their homes after operation when necessary.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The Ministry of Health, in furnishing to Medical Officers of Health the number of births and deaths registered in their district during the year observes that these are the numbers registered during the calendar year, and are corrected for both inward and outward transfers.

For calculating both the birth-rate and death-rate the Registrar General estimates the population of the Benfieldside District at 8,006.

The total number of births registered during the year was 255, 136 males and 119 females. This gives an annual birth-rate of 31·8 per 1,000 inhabitants. The birth-rate for all England and Wales in 1920 was 25·4. 12 births were illegitimate—9 males and 3 females.

The following table shows the number of births and the birth-rate for the past five years :—

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.
No. of Births	199	171	229	208	255
Birthrate	26·29	22·59	30·12	25·93	31·8

The birth-rate recorded in your district for 1920 is the largest that has occurred for the past ten years, and is very considerably in excess of that for all England and Wales.

The total number of deaths registered in 1920 was 108—51 males and 57 females. This gives an annual death-rate of 13·4 per 1,000. The death-rate for all England and Wales was 12·4.

The following table shows the number of deaths and the death-rate for the past five years :—

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.
No. of deaths	107	90	122	128	108
Deathrate	14·79	11·6	16·12	16·6	13·4

The quarterly death-rate in your area for the year 1920 was as follows :—

	1st Quarter.	2nd Quarter.	3rd Quarter.	4th Quarter.
Death-rate ...	7·7	17·6	9·06	8·2
Infant Mortality	27·3	190	72	80

It will be observed that during the second quarter of the year both the general death-rate and the Infantile mortality rate were abnormally high. This was accounted for as 9 children under 1 year died during this quarter—6 from Bronchitis, 2 from Congenital Diseases, and 1 from Premature Birth.

The following table shows the causes of death for the year 1920 in the Benfieldside Urban District:—

CAUSES OF DEATH.	MALES.	FEMALES.
Diphtheria and Croup	1	3
Influenza	1	0
Erysipelas	0	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	5	5
Tubercular Meningitis	0	1
Other Tuberculous Diseases	0	1
Cancer, Malignant Disease	3	4
Rheumatic Fever	0	1
Organic Heart Disease	3	3
Bronchitis	5	8
Pneumonia	7	1
Other Respiratory Diseases	0	1
Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	0	3
Appendicitis	0	1
Cirrhosis of Liver	1	0
Nephritis and Bright's Disease	1	4
Parturition	0	1
Congenital Debility	4	4
Violence apart from Suicide	4	0
Other defined Diseases	15	15
Causes, ill-defined	1	0

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

23 deaths of children under 1 year were registered, equal to an Infantile death-rate of 90 per 1,000 births. The rate for England and Wales was 80 per 1,000 births.

The following table shows the relative Infantile mortality rate and the number of Infants deaths registered during the past 5 years :—

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.
Infantile Deaths registered ...	13	20	26	18	23
Infantile Mortality rate per 1000 births ...	65.3	117.5	113.27	86.5	90

The following table shows the number of cases of each disease, the ages at which the deaths occurred and the cause of death in each case during the year 1920.

	Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 1 month.	1-3 months.	3-6 months.	6-12 months.	Total Deaths under 1 year
Convulsions	...	2	1	...	3	1	...	...	4
Bronchitis and Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	4	7
Diarrhoea	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	2
Premature Birth	3	...	3	...	6	...	...	...	6
Congenital Debility	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	2
Other Causes	2	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	2

It will be observed from the above table that 11, or practically half of the total number of infantile deaths occurred before reaching the age of one month. Respiratory Diseases accounted for the largest proportion.

The chief measures of prevention of Infantile Mortality are :—

1. Improved sanitary conditions.
2. Attention to domestic cleanliness.
3. Education of girls and mothers in personal hygiene.
4. Careful feeding of infants.
5. Attention to the health of the mother before the birth of the child.
6. Attendance of mothers and infants regularly at the Infant Welfare Centre.
7. Proper attention to mothers when child is being born.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

WATER.—An efficient supply of good water was available for all domestic and sanitary purposes, and was supplied by the Weardale and Consett Water Company. The supply, which was plentiful and constant, is an upland water, and is medium soft. The Durham County Council are applying for the rights to control this Company, and intend making extensions. There was no contamination of any kind reported.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.—No pollution requiring any action was discovered during the year.

DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE.—There are 36 houses and farm buildings in the District for which no main sewers are available (all detached houses), and these are drained to cesspools and then on to the land. The whole of the remaining houses are connected up to the main sewers. All the sewage is treated at the Council's Disposal Works at Westwood Farm, which is situated outside your area, by sedimentation and filtration, and is very satisfactory, a good effluent being regularly obtained. Sufficient land is available for treating the sewage when the filters for any reason require repairing or cleaning. The street gullies are regularly cleaned out, and the sewers flushed when necessary.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.—

	<i>Water-closets.</i>	<i>Ash-closets.</i>	<i>Privies.</i>
1913	386	493	771
1914	457	493	703
1915	506	493	657
1916	526	493	637
1917	533	491	632
1918	534	491	632
1919	537	490	629
1920	549	490	617

The following table shows the number of Conversions for past 8 years :—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Privies to Water-closets.</i>	<i>Privies to Ash closets.</i>	<i>Ash-closets to Water-closets.</i>
1913	13	119	3
1914	63	4	4
1915	46	...	...
1916	20	...	...
1917	5	...	2
1918	1	...	...
1919	2	...	1
1920	12	...	...
Total for 8 years	162	123	10

SCAVENGING.—For scavenging purposes the district is divided into four areas, three of which were let by contract, and the remaining area (which was the largest one) was done by direct labour.

The work by contract in one area has been well done, but in the other two it has not been carried out to the satisfaction of your Sanitary Inspector. The area which was carried out by direct labour has been much more satisfactory.

Your Council have now obtained a motor properly constructed for this work, and the scavenging should now be carried out more effectively, and probably at a cheaper rate.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF DISTRICT.

	No. of Informal Notices.	Formal Notices.	Nuisances Abated.
Dwelling Houses and Schools—			
Foul Conditions	10	...	10
Structural Defects	91	77	14
Overcrowding	11	3	2
Cowsheds	3	...	3
Slaughter Houses	2	...	2
Water-closets	15	...	15
Defective Traps	2	...	2
Pigsties	1	...	1
Other Faults in House Drainage ...	17	...	17
Total ...	152	80	66

Of the large number of notices for structural defects which remain unabated, the owners of all the properties offer the same reason for not proceeding with the work, namely, the difficulty of obtaining the necessary labour and materials. Many of them have made a commencement.

Inspection of Factories, Workshops, and Workplaces.

		<i>Inspections.</i>	<i>Notices.</i>	<i>Prosecutions.</i>
Factories	...	6	nil	nil
Workshops	...	66	nil	nil
Workplaces	...	nil	nil	nil
		—	—	—
Total	...	72	nil	nil

Defects found in Workshops and Workplaces.

Two cases of defective sanitary accommodation were found, and these were remedied.

Registered Workshops.

Bakehouses, 2 ; Boot repairers, 6 ; Dressmakers, 2 ; Joiners and Builders, 7 ; Blacksmiths, 3 ; Plumbers, 2 ; Plasterers, 3 ; Monumental Masons, 1 ; Saddlers, 1 ; Tailors, 4 ; Motor Repairers, 2 ;—total, 33.

There are no Common Lodging Houses nor any underground dwellings.

Schools.

Regular inspection of all the Schools in the District was carried out, and no sanitary defect was found in any of them during the year. 6 Schools were disinfected. Sufficient water-closets and water supply are available.

FOOD.

MILK SUPPLY—There are 16 Cowkeepers and 4 Milksellers in the District. All the Cowsheds are visited and inspected once a month, and all have received attention during the year. One has been rebuilt, and two have been properly repaired. Some still require attention, and this should be insisted on as soon as possible. The milk supplied in the district is of a satisfactory nature, and adequate arrangements are made for its distribution.

The Mothers and Children Milk Order, 1919, continues to be carried out in a similar way to that described in my previous Annual Report.

MEAT.—There are eight registered Slaughter Houses in the district. These have been regularly inspected, and have been kept in a satisfactory condition. No diseased meat was found during the year. A thorough inspection of all meat killed is next to impossible owing to the slaughter houses being situated all over the district, and there being no fixed time for slaughtering, which takes place at all times. In my opinion, a public abattoir, suitably situated to embrace the three Urban Councils, Benfieldside, Consett, and Leadgate, would be of distinct advantage. By this means, all the animals intended for food purposes could be inspected at the time of slaughter, and in this way ensure entire freedom from all disease, as all the viscera could then be inspected. All the small private slaughter houses in the area could then be closed.

The number of Slaughter houses in use in the district was—In 1914, 8 ; January, 1920, 8 ; December, 1920, 8.

OTHER FOODS.—2 lots of unwholesome food were condemned as unfit for human consumption.

BAKEHOUSES.—There are two Bakehouses in the district. Both are in a good sanitary condition.

There are no underground bakehouses, the one previously registered being now closed.

SALE OF FOOD AND DRUGS ACT.—The Inspectors for this purpose are appointed and under the control of the County Council.

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

142 cases of Infectious Disease were notified in your district during the year, and these included Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Erysipelas, Ophthalmia Neonatorum, Pulmonary and other forms of Tuberculosis, Acute Pneumonia, and Malaria.

The following table shows the number of each disease notified, the ages of occurrence, and the number removed to Infectious Hospital.

	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1-5 years.	5-10 years.	10-15 years.	15-25 years.	25-45 years.	45-65 years.	65 upwards.	Sent to Hospital.
Diphtheria	33	11	8	4	6	3	1	...	...	28
Scarlet Fever	54	20	21	5	3	4	1	...	...	46
Ophthalmia	4	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	9	1	1	...	...	2	5	...	...	...
Pneumonia	22	8	4	...	3	3	2	2	...	...
Malaria	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	15	...	3	...	...	9	2	1	...	...
Other Tubercular Diseases	4	...	1	...	1	1	1	...	...	...

DIPHTHERIA.—33 cases notified, 28 removed to Infectious Hospital. 4 fatal cases occurred. The cases were equally distributed throughout the year, and covered the whole district. All the houses were inspected either by your Sanitary Inspector or your Medical Officer of Health. Anti-Diphtheria serum is supplied to Medical Practitioners, and is promptly used in all cases.

SCARLET FEVER—54 cases were notified, 46 removed to Infectious Hospital. No fatal cases. A thorough disinfection of the houses is carried out both in Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria cases. Scarlet Fever was more prevalent this year than during previous year—54 cases as compared with 18.

OPHTHALMIA NEONATORIUM.—4 cases notified—3 cases recovered—1 child died on tenth day from premature birth. All the cases were under the care of doctors.

TUBERCULOSIS.—15 cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, and 4 of other types of Tubercular Disease were notified. 10 deaths occurred during the year from Pulmonary Tuberculosis and 2 from Non-Pulmonary. The County Council Tuberculosis Dispensary situated at Consett is regularly attended. Additional sanatorium treatment is urgently required for the County of Durham. Bacteriological aid to diagnosis is largely used by the Medical Practitioners of the district, and is carried out for the Durham County Council by the College of Medicine, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

INFLUENZA.—Only 1 death was registered during the year as being due to Influenza. Fortunately no epidemic of this disease occurred.

Your district was entirely free from Smallpox, Typhoid Fever, Puerperal Fever, and Encephalitis Lethargica.

During the year 82 lots of Infectious Bedding were stoved, and 6 schools and 82 houses disinfected after Infectious Disease.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

STAFF.—Medical Officer of Health; Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances; Assistant Surveyor; Architectural Assistant for New Housing Scheme.

HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—The Villa Real Infectious Hospital, containing 50 beds, is available for the treatment of Typhoid Fever, Diphtheria, and Scarlet Fever,

Provision is made for the isolation and treatment of Smallpox by the Lanchester Joint Hospital Board for any cases in a Hospital used solely for this purpose, and situated at Maiden Law, near Lanchester.

ADOPTIVE ACTS in force in your area are :—Public Health Amendment Act, 1889, Part III ; Infectious Diseases Notification Act, 1889 ; Infectious Diseases Prevention Act, 1890, and Sections 15 to 25 and 27 to 33 inclusive comprised in Part II, Sections 34 to 42 and 44 to 51 comprised in Part III, Part IV, Part V, and Part VI, Sections 79, 80, and 81, comprised in Part VII, Part VIII, and Section 95, comprised in Part X of the Public Health Amendment Act, 1907.

BYE-LAWS.—New Streets and Buildings ; Slaughter Houses ; Prevention of Nuisances ; Common Lodging Houses ; Cleansing of Footways, Ashpits, etc. ; Dairies, Milkshops, and Cowsheds.

HOUSING.

Number of Houses in the District	...	...	...	1,730
Number of Working-class Houses	...	...	...	1,690

It is estimated that at least 150 new houses are required, and your Council have in hand a Housing Scheme for 164 houses, to be built on 17 acres of land, for which the sanction of the Ministry was obtained in November, 1920. A commencement to build was made in December, 1920.

5 houses are at present nearing completion, being built by private owners.

There was practically no increase in the population in the district during the year, nor is any anticipated in the future.

OVERCROWDING.—This is very prevalent in the district, but is generally marked throughout the country, and your district, in my opinion, would compare very favourably with many surrounding places. The chief causes are the shortage of houses and the limited accommodation in many of the existing houses. The new houses at present in course of erection, and those to be built, will solve the difficulty. A few cases have been remedied during the year by larger families exchanging into the larger houses.

FITNESS OF HOUSES.—1. GENERAL STANDARD OF HOUSING IN THE DISTRICT.—Of the 1,730 dwelling-houses in the area 338 are of two rooms, and of these 170 have yard and conveniences common to two or more tenants. The remainder have enclosed yard and convenience for each house. The other houses have from three to seven rooms, and are nearly all of a newer type.

2. GENERAL CHARACTER OF DEFECTS FOUND TO EXIST.—The 338 houses mentioned above are all very old, with low rooms, small windows, defective roofs and floors, walls damp, no pantries, or if present are not suitable for storing food, ventilation and lighting practically absent, and surroundings in many cases far from sanitary. 79 of these houses were scheduled as being below the reasonable standard of fitness. The property being old, the necessary repairs are heavy, but neither the owners nor the tenants do all that could be done to make them reasonably fit for habitation.

GENERAL ACTION TAKEN AS REGARDS UNFIT HOUSES.—Notices under the Public Health Acts are served where necessary on the tenants to clean the premises if anything insanitary is found. Under the Housing Acts, 72 notices have been served on the owners, but only 7 have completely carried out all that was required. Shortage of labour and material are the reasons given by the others for the delay in complying with the notices. In all cases of notices served under the Housing Acts, the ashpit privies are being cleared away and water-closets substituted.

UNHEALTHY AREAS —The houses shown on the plan which was sent to the Ministry of Health prior to October, 1919, will have to be demolished as soon as new houses are available.

BYE-LAWS RELATING TO HOUSES, ETC, at present in existence have been in force since 1904. There is at present no need for any new bye-laws, or revision of the existing ones.

APPENDICES.

HOUSING CONDITIONS.

STATISTICS

Year ended 31st December, 1920.

1.—GENERAL.

(1) Estimated population	...	...	9272
(2) General death-rate	...	...	13·4
(3) Death-rate from tuberculosis	...	...	1·4
(4) Infantile mortality	...	...	90
(5) Number of dwelling-houses of all classes	...	...	1730
(6) Number of working-class dwelling-houses	...	...	1690
(7) Number of new working-class houses erected	...	...	None

2.—UNFIT DWELLING-HOUSES.

I.—Inspection.

(1) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	156
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910	...	98
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	79

II.—Remedy of Defects without Service of Formal Notices.

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers	7
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III.—Action under Statutory Powers.

A. *Proceedings under section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1919.*

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	...	72
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit—		
(a) by owners	...	4 many are partially done
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners	...	...
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close	...	11

B. *Proceedings under Public Health Acts.*

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	...	3 to provide W.C.'s.
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied—		
(a) by owners	...	2
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners	...	1

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN MURRAY, M.B., BCH.,

Medical Officer of Health.

The Hawthorns, Blackhill,

March 14th, 1921.

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